DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 344 411 EC 301 140

AUTHOR Parke, Beverly N.
TITLE Collaboratively Planning and Delivering Services to Gifted and Talented Students.
PUB DATE Mar 92
NOTE 8p.; In: Challenges in Gifted Education: Developing Potential and Investing in Knowledge for the 21st Century; see EC 301 131.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Ability Identification; *Cooperation; Cooperative Planning; Cooperative Programs; Curriculum Development; *Delivery Systems; Educational Cooperation; Educational Needs; Elementary Secondary Education; *Gifted; Interdisciplinary Approach; Models; Program Development; Program Evaluation; *Regular and Special Education Relationship; Student Development; Student Placement; *Talent; Talent Identification; Teamwork

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the rationale for and means of achieving effective collaboration in planning and delivering services to gifted and talented students. First, the historical and philosophical background of current emphases on increased collaboration are reviewed. The necessity of collaboration with general education professionals is stressed and a full service model emphasizing such collaboration is offered. Guidelines are then proposed for collaboration in the following areas: the student selection process (especially in the early planning stages); program design (development of program options); program placement (successful placement is more likely when all points of view are considered); curriculum development (both in planning and direct delivery of instruction); and program evaluation. Improved collaboration which focuses on individual student well being is seen to have far reaching implications for a more vital, energetic system of instruction. (15 references) (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Collaboratively Planning and Delivering Services to Gifted and Talented Students

Beverly N. Parke — *Educational Consultant*

ED344411

Introduction

Collaboration is certain to be one of the preeminent words of this decade. Collaboration is being discussed in the literature that describes the changes in society (Naisbitt, 1982), the workplace, homes, schools, and classrooms as the challenges currently facing our institutions and families are being addressed. With resources less abundant and needs at an all time high, working collaboratively to identify and solve problems is a strategy that is being employed more and more frequently. The collaborative process offers the most creative and responsive results because marshalling the talents of many individuals results in outcomes that surpass what any one individual can accomplish.

Historical and Philosophical Background

While experts in the field of gifted child education (Clark, 1988; Sellin & Birch, 1980; Smith & Renzulli, 1979) have long called for collaborative efforts with general education, little true collaboration exists. More frequently, there are cooperative relationships (VanTassel-Baska, 1991) in which general educators are informed as to what is happening in gifted child education programs or their assistance is requested in identifying eligible students. Using the definition of collaboration as "a coming together to focus on a particular problem or issue" (VanTassel-Baska, 1991, p. 253), there is scant evidence of collaborative practice between professionals in the general and gifted child education ranks.

This is surprising in that, historically, gifted students have spent a great deal of time in the general education arena. They have been enrolled primarily in programs offered as supplements to those in general education (Cox, Daniel, & Boston, 1985) or, in approximately 50% of the cases, have been enrolled full-time in general education programs (Council for Exceptional Children, 1978). As recently as 1990, only 48% of the states in the nation mandated programs for gifted students (Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, 1990).

With program availability and appropriateness at a premium, it is not surprising that the achievement levels of gifted and talented students have been alarmingly low. Recent data from the 1988 International Assessment of Educational Progress (Callahan, 1990) indicate that the top 1% of students in the United States are not competing well with their peers in eleven other industrialized countries. These students are reported to rank last (12th) in biology and algebra, 10th in chemistry, and 8th in physics. Further, average Japanese students appear to achieve at a higher level in calculus than the top 5% of students in the United States.

While many factors may help to explain such circumstances, one clearly must focus on the current types of programs for gifted students and the paucity of early or articulated intervention. In studying the effects of program absence on skill development (Ness & Latessa, 1979), declining discrepancies were found between the number of skills mastered by gifted and nongifted groups when gifted students were not involved in specialized programs in kindergarten through grade 2.

With such evidence that gifted and talented students in general education classrooms are not reaching their full potential under the current structures of program delivery, it is vital to begin collaborative efforts in earnest.

EC 301140

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

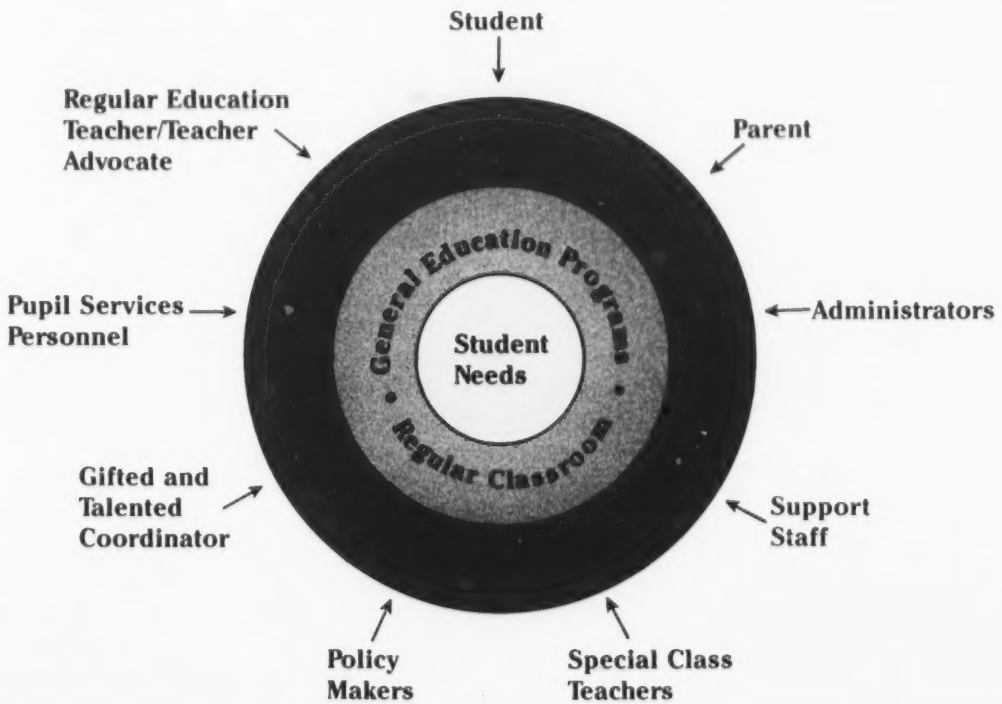
Some progress appears to have occurred in that a transition has been made from referring to *the* gifted and talented program, to *programs* for the gifted and talented (Cox, Daniel, & Boston, 1985; Kirk & Gallagher, 1983), to a continuum of services and programs *involving* the gifted and talented (The Association for Gifted, 1989). Thus, the entire education community has now been enfranchised in the quest to bring appropriate education to gifted and talented students. True collaboration is the next step to a full-service model of program delivery.

Collaborating with General Education Professionals

The potential areas for collaboration among professionals dealing with gifted and talented students are as many as the problems that these students and those responsible for their educational welfare face. Certainly, matters of student selection, program design, program placement, curriculum, evaluation, and personal well-being are a part of comprehensive collaborative planning and service delivery.

Perhaps the most essential element needed for collaboration to occur is the one that is most difficult to achieve. That is, everyone in the education community must see the need, accept responsibility, and pursue the goal of full service for gifted students. It is the fundamental responsibility of all educators to meet the individual needs of all students, including those who are gifted and talented. At the same time, those trained in educating gifted students must be willing to share responsibility and welcome the insight that their general education colleagues bring to the process. Mutual respect and determination can result in a mighty team with greater capability than any one member can contribute.

Figure 1
Full Service Model for Programs Involving Gifted and Talented Students



To begin the process, it is necessary to adopt a new concept of what full service for gifted and talented students means. In a full-service model, student needs are at the center of all educational decisions. This student-centered approach recognizes the distinguishing learning characteristics of gifted students (Parke, 1990) that drive their need for programs. Full service to this diverse population can be delivered only by developing a multiple-programming approach (Parke, 1989b; Cox, Daniel, & Boston, 1985) that matches programming options with individual student profiles. Decisions regarding program design for any one student are made by an interdisciplinary placement and review team consisting of educators, the student, and the parent or primary care giver. Each student's case is then coordinated by a teacher-advocate, most likely the homeroom teacher or gifted/talented coordinator.

For this type of model to work, collaboration must occur on an ongoing basis between the student and the teacher-advocate, the teacher-advocate and the parent, the teacher-advocate and other service personnel, and among members of the placement and review team. In this way, a flexible system responsive to individual student needs can emerge and ensure full and appropriate service.

Collaborating in the Student Selection Process

Successful selection of students to programs involving the gifted relies on wide-ranging acceptance of the need for such programs and agreement as to the populations to be served. This can best be accomplished through collaborative planning. If there is anywhere in the program development process that is ripe with issues and problems basic to collaboration, it is in determining what factors (i.e., student needs) merit a program.

A planning committee might consider the following questions:

- What needs do students display that make a program necessary?
- Which students are demonstrating the need for differentiated programs?
- How is the general education program failing to meet the needs of gifted and talented students?
- What additional program types are necessary to meet those needs?
- Are there underachieving gifted and talented students in the classroom?
- Are program options needed to address their underachievement?
- Are programs addressing the arts needed?
- How will students be selected for programs?
- Are measures other than norm-referenced tests acceptable?
- Who will make the final selections?
- Will students be involved in the process?

Such questions are at the core of the student selection and service delivery systems and must be handled with care. A collaborative team that represents different disciplines and grade levels, the administrative staff, other policy-making groups, parents, and students is more likely to develop the broad-based assessment procedures that lead to strong programs because such a team reflects the culture in which the programs must exist. Team members will raise important questions and concerns early in the planning process and will assist in building programs and developing procedures that will serve the students in a manner most fitting to their setting.

Collaborating in Program Design

Most programs for gifted and talented students focus on the academic areas of mathematics and language arts (Parke, 1989a). Granted, these are among the most vital aspects of curriculum, but students show exceptional abilities in many other areas as well. Full service requires building differentiation throughout the program offerings in a manner that takes into consideration the range and intensity of gifted students' needs and the learning characteristics that differ from those of their peers (i.e., the pace at which they learn, their drive to explore topics in depth, and their mature or unusual interests).

When developing the program options to be included in a differentiated system of instruction, a collaborative effort among colleagues allows for discussion of a broad range of content possibilities. It also opens up clear channels to determine what options are already in place systemwide. Student needs can then be matched to existing program options to determine what program development is required. It is rare that full-service programming is in place; it is also rare when no service possibilities exist. As student needs and district resources change, the collaborative planning process must continue because the program design phase of program development is never complete. Collaboration is the link to full service and full acceptance.

Collaborating in Program Placement

Once the assessment of needs has been completed and program design has begun in earnest, placement decisions for individual students can be made. Again, collaboration can help bring clarity to the important questions that arise during the placement process:

- Should students skip grades?
- Can a class that has low, but appropriate, enrollment operate?
- To what extent do gifted students need to be involved with others their own age?
- What if a student fails in the placement?
- What if a student does not wish to enroll in the program?
- Are student schedules too heavy?

Collaboration involving the student, parent, regular classroom teacher, teacher-advocate, gifted/talented coordinator, guidance counselor, special class teacher, administrator, and other appropriate parties can address these issues from many perspectives. Again, the likelihood for successful placement increases as the various points of view are brought to bear on the issues.

Collaborating in Curriculum Development

While collaboration is important in all facets of planning and delivering services to gifted students, it is especially critical in the area of curriculum development. As stated above, full service requires differentiated curriculum in general education curriculum as well as in special programs, including such frequently forgotten areas of study as vocational education, special education, and the arts. Collaboration is needed within and among departments, school buildings, and grade levels; among teachers and students; among the students themselves; and between the schools and special services and community agencies. Such collaboration opens up great possibilities for interdisciplinary study, appropriately-paced programs, challenging and stimulating content, in-depth study, community service projects, program and content articulation, mentorships, and peer coaching. The possibilities are endless.

Collaborative planning of curriculum helps to avoid turf battles over content, possessiveness of resources, lack of articulation, unimaginative course work, student passivity, and lock-step learning. These pitfalls torpedo programs for high-ability students on a regular basis. The topic of meeting individual student needs should be discussed in all schools regarding all students. It is at the core of professional responsibility.

Collaboration can also occur in the actual delivery of instruction. When grouping students for instruction, collaborative practice might see students teamed with teachers who are the most able and willing to provide the more complex, rigorous, appropriately paced, and creative lessons that the gifted find challenging. An instructional team concept may emerge in which teachers specialize in content areas and assist other team members in lesson planning and determining what is important for the students to know. Resources and expertise may be shared so that a flexibly paced, continuous progress curriculum can be a reality. Thus, students could have the opportunity to pursue their ideas on an in-depth basis and could use materials that are at their achievement levels.

Collaborating in Evaluation

Many important questions must be considered when evaluating the effectiveness of services to gifted and talented students:

- How will the success of services be defined?
- How can success be measured?
- What do students consider to be indicators of success in these programs?
- Should a comprehensive evaluation procedure be mounted?
- Who will conduct the evaluation activities?
- Is an outside evaluator needed?

The first question alone can engage an evaluation team for weeks! To assure that it is answered completely and accurately, data must be gathered from all parties who have pertinent information, such as program planners, policy makers, parents, and other constituencies who affect the program planning and maintenance decisions. Sound evaluation practice assures that information is derived from those who are closest to the source of the data being sought. It also assures that the evaluation plan takes into account the questions of all who have commissioned the study.

Many parties, therefore, must be involved in the evaluation process. It is unlikely that any one person can take on all evaluation tasks and complete a comprehensive, responsive study without the help of others. It would be foolish to do so. With the integration of programs for gifted and talented students into the general education structure, the wealth of direct information that general educators hold, and the health of programs depending on the activities of many people, it is essential that broad-based evaluations spring from broad-based committees representing the constituencies of the program and the constituencies of the evaluation. Collaboration cannot be ignored.

Collaborating for Student Well-Being

Gifted and talented students appear to be at risk in regular classroom settings when their unique learning and personal needs are not addressed (Parke, 1989b). Their well-being stems from nurturing, safe environments in which excellence is valued, individual differences are accepted, and learning is risk-free. Many gifted students also require support and strategies for developing and maintaining positive self-concepts as they sort through the challenges that face them throughout their lives. Such matters

as perfectionism, multipotentiality, asymmetrical growth, and meeting the expectations of others can derail even the seemingly most resourceful student.

Collaboration with support service personnel can help those planning and delivering instruction to gifted students in a manner that may be more conducive to development of their full potential. Counselors, psychologists, social workers, and others may wish to become directly involved in service delivery by providing seminars and group or individual guidance to gifted students and their classmates in an effort to make the classroom a place in which learning can flourish.

Implications of Collaboration

When taken to its logical conclusion, collaboration in the education community has implications that affect the entire system of instruction. When student needs become the primary basis for educational decision making, policies may need to be reviewed, curricular delivery systems reconceptualized, instructional materials reorganized, staffing patterns redesigned, and parent/student roles in instructional planning and delivery reestablished. True differentiation of service for the gifted and talented invariably results in differentiation of service for all students. Differentiation for all students cannot be delivered without systems that are responsive, flexible, and collaborative.

Collaboration brings together a convergence of talent likely to explode into new ideas, unique practices, and confederations of purpose. Thus, conventional practice that is not working may be challenged and new strategies offered in its place. Or, for practice that is working, a new commitment to its preservation may emerge. Regardless, a more vital, energetic system of instruction is bound to emerge. Teachers and students alike will see the meaning in what they are doing and feel a commitment to ensure its continuation.

The collaborative process enables people throughout a system to come together to jointly work on the problems and issues at hand. With gifted and talented programs being, in the large part, separate from general education, they have been subject to the changes in philosophy and funding that face all districts at one time or another. Collaborative planning and service delivery makes those programs far less vulnerable as they become the concern and responsibility of a greater number of people. The more programs involving gifted and talented students are institutionalized as part of the general array of program offerings, the less likely they are to become easy targets for monetary savings or ideological disagreement. The collaborative process, more than any other one factor, allows provisions for gifted and talented students to become part of the school district's full-service program model in which the needs of all students are seen as equally important.

REFERENCES

Callahan, C. (1990). A commissioned paper on the performance of high ability students in national and international tests. Unpublished paper, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA.

Clark, B. (1988). *Growing up gifted* (3rd ed.). Columbus, OH: Charles Merrill.

Council for Exceptional Children. (1978). *The nation's commitment to the education of gifted and talented children and youth.* Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted. (1990). *The 1990 state of the states gifted and talented education report.* Augusta, ME: Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted.

Cox, J., Daniel, N., & Boston, B. (1985). *Educating able learners: Programs and promising practices.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
Kirk, S., & Gallagher, J. (1983). *Educating exceptional children* (4th ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.
Naisbitt, J. (1982). *Megatrends.* New York: Warner Books, Inc.
Ness, B., & Latessa, E. (1979). Gifted children and self-teaching techniques. *Directive Teacher, 2*(1), 10-14.
Parke, B. (1989a). Educating the gifted and talented: An agenda for the future. *Educational Leadership, 46*(6), 4-5.
Parke, B. (1989b). *Gifted students in regular classrooms.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
Parke, B. (1990, January/February). Gifted students in regular classrooms. *Educating Able Learners: Discovering and Nurturing Talent.*
Sellin, D., & Birch, J. (1980). *Educating gifted and talented learners.* Rockville, MD: Aspen Systems Corp.
Smith, L., & Renzulli, J. (1979). *A guidebook for developing individualized educational programs (IEP) for gifted and talented students.* Mansfield Center, CN: Creative Learning Press.
The Association for Gifted. (1989). *Standards for programs involving the gifted and talented.* Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.
VanTassel-Baska, J. (1991). Serving the disabled gifted through educational collaboration. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 14*(3), 246-266.